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MEMORANDUM

DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

The Situation in Vietnam

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5 November 1967

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Information as of 1600
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HIGHLIGHTS

Significant military operations in South Vietnam over the weekend were confined to IV Corps. The situation remained quiet around Loc Ninh, where adjusted enemy casualty figures now stand at 771 killed.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Significant contacts with enemy forces over the weekend were confined to IV Corps where Communist units attacked three towns in the Mekong Delta region (Paras. 1-2). The situation remained quiet in the vicinity of Loc Ninh where, according to officially adjusted casualty figures, the enemy lost 720 troops in the period 28 October - 2 November (Para. 3). Recent Communist propaganda broadcasts have claimed victory at Loc Ninh, claiming that the Communists' activity there is in response to US raids on North Vietnam (Paras. 4-5).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam: Lower house deputy Ho Huu Tuong had added to speculation that the followers of Thich Tri Quang and Thich Tam Chau are preparing to break away from their leaders in order to resolve the impasse over the Buddhist charter question (Paras. 1-3). A lower house deputy has been convicted of violating the election law, but it is not yet clear whether he will be allowed to take his seat in the house (Paras. 4-5).

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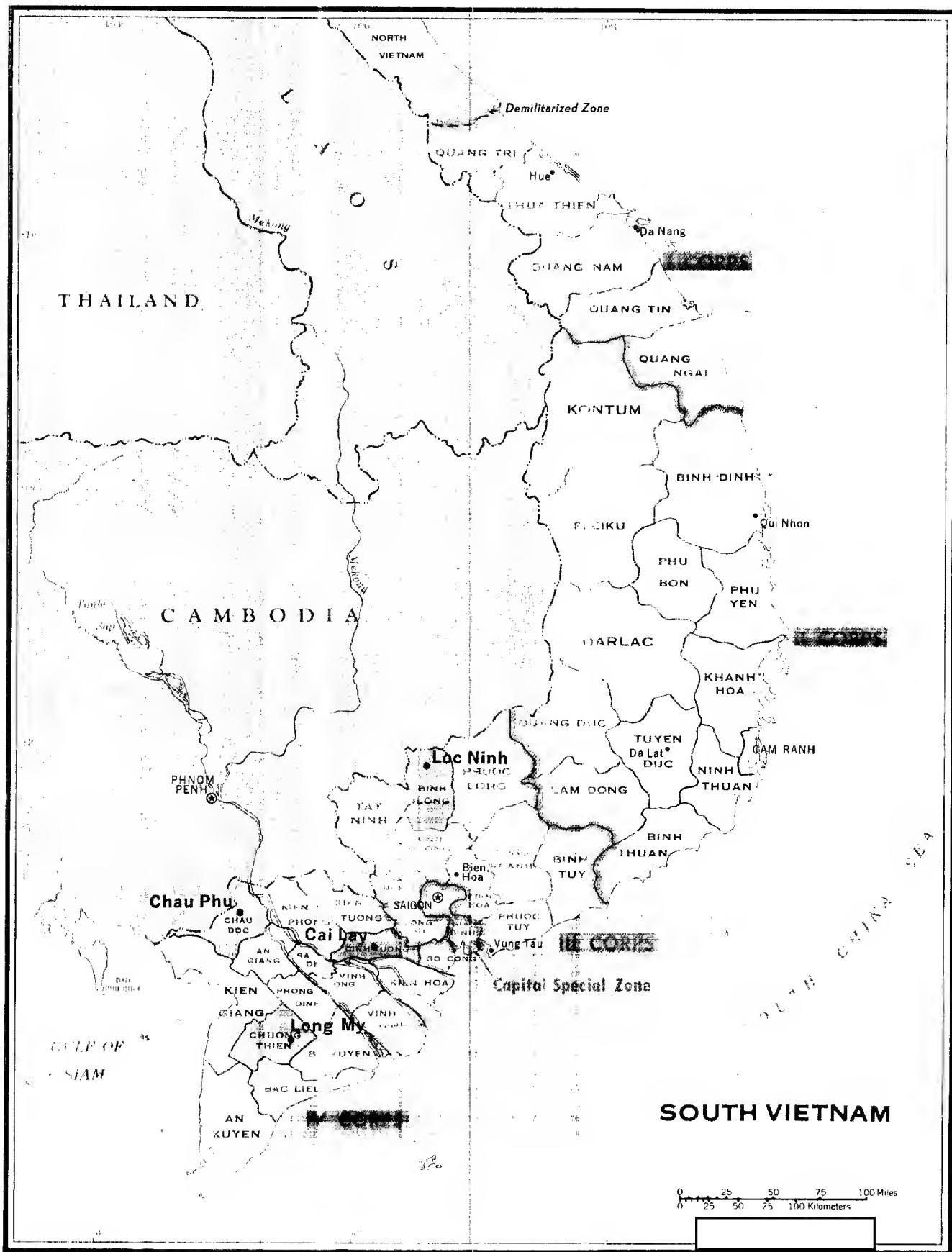
IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. Communist Political Developments: North Vietnamese leaders' speeches on the 50th anniversary of the Soviet Union, while replete with praise of the Soviet Union, also included the possibility that Hanoi has hardened its terms for talks (Paras. 1-5).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. No major contacts with enemy forces in the I, II, or III Corps Tactical Zones were reported over the weekend. In the IV Corps area, however, the Communists launched significant attacks against three Mekong Delta towns in an apparent continuation of a series of hostile actions begun in this region on 28 October.

2. The most recent attacks were mounted against Chau Phu, the capital city of Chau Doc Province, Cai Lay, in Dinh Tuong Province, and Long My, a district town in Chuong Thien. Mortar attacks and ground assaults in the three incidents killed 38 South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians and wounded 179 others. Enemy losses reportedly were 31 dead.

3. The situation remained quiet in the vicinity of Loc Ninh in Binh Long Province, where heavy fighting broke out on 28 October. Officially adjusted casualty figures through 2 November indicated that 31 friendly and 720 enemy troops had been killed in the week-long battle. Field reports on 5 November showed that the number of enemy dead subsequently has risen to 771.

4. Recent Communist propaganda has claimed that the activity at Loc Ninh is in response to bombing raids on Hanoi and has also implied that it represents an opening salvo in the much-heralded "winter-spring" campaign.

5. A Hanoi broadcast on 31 October claimed that the destruction of a multibattalion "US/Puppet" combat group at Loc Ninh the previous day was to avenge the victims of recent US bombing of Hanoi. This report also asserted that this was the first major victory of the winter-spring season, and that it opened bright prospects for the quick annihilation of big enemy units in the near future. Another Hanoi broadcast on 2 November offered a detailed account of the "victory" and concluded with the claim that "intensification of the bombing of the North cannot in any way save GIs in the South."

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Another source has contributed to speculation that followers of the militant and the moderate Buddhist factions are heading for a breakaway from their respective leaders, Thich Tri Quang and Thich Tam Chau. Lower house deputy Ho Huu Tuong, who is also vice-rector of the Buddhists' Van Hanh University, told an embassy officer on 2 November that a personal reconciliation between the two leaders is unlikely because of their intransigent stands on the charter issue.

2. He believes the solution to the dispute therefore lies in the removal of Quang and Chau, and the amalgamation of the two factions into a "third force" composed of more moderate Buddhists who could unite the church. Tuong even went so far as to suggest that the Americans approach the government and recommend that Quang and Chau be sent abroad. His choice for the leader of such a third force would be a nun, Dieu Cong, who he said is the most prestigious nun in South Vietnam.

3. Tuong has been accused of pro-Communist sympathies and his Senate candidacy was disallowed on those grounds. He has generally shown a marked sympathy for the militant faction, but apparently believes that unity--he would obviously favor a militant-oriented unity--under new leaders is the only way out of the present impasse. He told the embassy officer that the line separating the militants from Communism is a thin one and that further alienation of that faction could drive it completely out of the government camp into the arms of the Communists. Tuong, who is apparently angling for the lower house chairmanship or at least the leadership of a significant bloc in the house, probably also sees some sort of Buddhist unity as necessary if he is to have a responsive group in the house to give him the power he probably envisages for himself.

Lower House Deputy Convicted

4. A provincial court has annulled the election of a lower house deputy, but it is not yet clear whether he will finally be barred from taking his seat in the

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house. According to a Saigon Post account, the Special Court of Kien Giang Province disqualified Ta Ngoc Mai, sentenced him to three months' imprisonment, and imposed a fine of 20,000 piasters for violation of the election law. Mai, along with four others associated with his campaign who were also convicted, was charged with using "armed pressure" on voters. Almost 40 persons, including the provincial judge, reportedly witnessed the intimidation attempts.

5. The Post item did not mention under which article of the election law Mai was convicted. In view of the sentence and fine imposed, however, it appears his conviction was for carrying a weapon into a polling place. If that is so, he will be allowed to defend himself before the lower house, which will have the final say on whether he is seated. Other election law articles under which Mai's conviction could have come carry heavier sentences than that meted out to him, and require a new election within three months.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Statements by Vietnamese Communist officials in both Moscow and Hanoi over the weekend were replete with high praise for the Soviet revolution, its example for Vietnam and the world, and the importance of Soviet assistance to the Vietnamese revolution. Vietnamese spokesmen also used the occasion to spell-out once again Hanoi's unbending terms for a settlement of the war, and to state their conditions for talks with the US.

2. Party first secretary Le Duan, head of the DRV delegation to Moscow, provided the major Vietnamese statement in a speech to the Supreme Soviet on 3 November. In his speech--which has thus far been transmitted only in a poor Russian domestic broadcast based on a simultaneous translation--Le Duan recounted the successful course of Communism since the October Revolution, claiming that the Soviet victory has helped the Vietnamese people to find a way to liberation. He said that--chiefly by relying on their own resources but bolstered by the material support from the fraternal socialist countries--the Vietnamese people are determined to gain complete victory.

3. Le Duan ridiculed what he termed "profuse talk about a false peace" and restated Hanoi's demand that the four points and the program of the Liberation Front serve as the basis for a settlement of the conflict. He added, moreover, that if the US "wishes to reckon with talks with the DRV Government, it must first of all, once and for all, and without any conditions, stop the bombing and other acts of war against the DRV."

4. Le Duan's formula for achieving talks--if accurately translated and broadcast--suggests that a further note of rigidity has been injected into Hanoi's position on the war. In the past, authoritative Hanoi spokesmen when speaking specifically of the possibility of talks have called simply for an "unconditional cessation of the bombing and all other

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acts of war against the DRV." Phrases such as "once and for all," suggesting a permanent halt, have not been used. Should Hanoi repeat Le Duan's statement on this point as broadcast by Moscow, the North Vietnamese would then appear to be demanding as a prerequisite for talks not only that the US stop the bombings unconditionally, but that such a halt be declared permanent as well.

5. In North Vietnam politburo member Truong Chinh expressed many of the same sentiments in a speech broadcast by Hanoi on 5 November. Chinh claimed that the success of the Vietnamese revolution is clearly assured by the support of the socialist camp. He stressed that the particular assistance of the Soviets was of "special importance" and that the services rendered the people of Vietnam by the Soviet Union were "truly great." The occasion for Chinh's speech was a grand meeting held in honor of a visiting anniversary delegation from the Soviet Union. Vietnamese rhetoric and attendance at this meeting, while in keeping with the occasion, were nonetheless similar in many instances to that afforded a Chinese delegation present during Peking's National Day early last month.

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